

February 27, 2012

Testimony of Senator Toni Boucher

**In Support of SB 218, AN ACT CONCERNING POLLING PLACES FOR  
PRIMARIES.**

Chairman Slossberg, Chairman Morin, Ranking Member McLachlan, Ranking Member Hwang, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, today I testify in support of SB 218, AN ACT CONCERNING POLLING PLACES FOR PRIMARIES, and urge this committee to pass this bill. SB 218 would permit municipalities to use fewer polling places for primaries than for the general election.

The turnout difference between general elections and primary elections is glaring. The high water mark for recent turnout was the 2008 Presidential election, which garnered an impressive 78.14% turnout of Connecticut voters. Turnout for an August 2009 Primary election was a meager 13.9%. Despite the disparity, our towns still had to properly staff and maintain the same number of polling places. This bill would give municipalities the flexibility to adjust the number of polling places depending on need.

As you know, there are potential municipal savings that could be realized through the elimination of polling locations. They include staffing costs, possible renting costs, the transportation of materials to each polling location, and the installation of phone lines for each polling location. In addition, some of my towns are finding it increasingly difficult to find enough poll workers to properly maintain each polling place, particularly in a low interest election.

Although SB 218 makes much needed changes to our polling laws, I would like to suggest that the cutoff population in the bill be raised from 20,000 residents to include towns with up to 50,000 residents, in the interest of benefiting more of our municipalities. During these difficult times, we need to extend the ability to cut costs to as many of our towns as possible. By allowing them to operate and pay for fewer polling places for lower turnout primaries, we will provide a small measure of financial relief that can be passed along to the taxpayers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak in favor of SB 218.